

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8354

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7433

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, AR

SUBJ: DRUG ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM IN ARGENTINA

REF: STATE 215835

FOR ORTIZ ARA/APU FROM AMB HILL

1. SINCE THE RECEIPT OF YOUR MESSAGE WE HAVE OBTAINED A TRANSCRIPT OF A TAPE RECORDING OF THE SANTUCHO PRESS CONFERENCE. IN TWO SEPARATE INSTANCES HE REFERS TO THE INTENSIFIED ACTIVITIES AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKERS AS PART OF A CIA PLOT FOR INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES. IN THE FIRST HE REFERS TO ALLEGED STATEMENTS MADE BY LOPEZ REGA AND/OR PRESIDENTE PERON TO THE RECENT GOVERNORS MEETING IN WHICH AN APPARENT CALL FOR INCREASED ANTI-DRUG CAMPAIGN IN THE PROVINCES IS, TO SANTUCHO, MERELY A COVER TO PERMIT CIA TO OPEN OFFICES IN ALL THE PROVINCES. THE SECOND, SOMEWHAT LATER, ALLEGES THAT THE AGREEMENT ON NARCOTICS WHICH LOPEZ REGA AND I SIGNED (IN OUR CAPACITIES AS CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE GOA/USG BINATIONAL COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS) IS A CIA-INSPIRED DOCUMENT TO PROVIDE COVER FOR ITW OWN OPERATIONS. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY ITSELF.

2. THERE IS OF COURSE NO CONNECTION BETWEEN OUR COOPERATION WITH THE GOA ON NARCOTICS MATTERS AND THE LATTERS ATTEMPTS
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TO GRAPPLE WITH THE UNRELATED TERRORIST PROBLEM. HOWEVER

AS YOU SUGGESTED WE HAVE REVIEWED THE PROAG SIGNED BY THEN AID DIRECTOR BETZIG WITH THE DIRECTOR OF THE GENDARMERIA. THE NARRATIVE PORTION STATES THAT THE USG WILL PROVIDE CERTAIN EQUIPMENT TO BE USED BY THE GENDARMERIA IN ANTI-NARCOTICS OPERATIONS, WHILE THE GENDARMERIA WILL PROVIDE SUFFICIENT MANPOWER FOR THE PROGRAM AND POSITION THE EQUIPMENT WHERE IT MAY BE USED MOST EFFECTIVELY AGAINST THE TRAFFICKERS. THE EQUIPMENT LIST ITSELF CONSISTS OF 20 SCOUT-TYPE VEHICLES, 2 SPOTTER AIRCRAFT AND RADIO TRANSCEIVERS.

3. THE IRRESPONSIBLE CHARGE CAN ALWAYS BE MADE THAT THE COMMODITIES BEING PROVIDED TO THE GOA ARE REALLY ONLY A COVER FOR US INVOLVEMENT IN ARGENTINE ANTI-TERRORIST ACTIONS, BUT A SIMILAR CHARGE COULD BE MADE IN ALMOST ANY OF THE APPROXIMATELY 60 COUNTRIES WHERE SOME TYPE OF ASSISTANCE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT ELEMENTS IS BEING PROVIDED BY FUNDS AUTHORIZED BY THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL. WE CANNOT, IN HONESTY, STATE THAT SHOULD THE GENDARMERIA UNDERTAKE SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS IN THE GOA CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRORISTS THE EQUIPMENT MIGHT NOT BE INVOLVED. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF PERMANENTLY STATIONING ANY USG PERSONNEL TO WORK ON NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT IN THE FAR NORTHWEST WHERE THE EQUIPMENT IS TO BE USED. HOWEVER, THE PROGRAM FOR NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED IN GOOD FAITH, PRESUMABLY ON BOTH SIDES. FOR THE USG TO TERMINATE OR MODIFY THAT PROGRAM BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE UNFOUNDED CHARGES WOULD PROBABLY NOT ONLY END THE GENDARMERIA'S INTEREST IN NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT, BUT ALSO COULD VERY POSSIBLY HAVE A MAJOR ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CURRENT EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEA AND BOTH THE GENDARMERIA AND THE FEDERAL NARCOTICS POLICE. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, THE POSSIBILITIES FOR GREATER NARCOTICS MOVEMENT TO AND THROUGH ARGENTINA DESTINED FOR THE US WOULD INCREASE ENORMOUSLY. GIVEN THAT THE USG HAS PLACED SUCH A HIGH PRIORITY ON ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO END SUCH TRAFFICKING, I DO NOT THINK IT WISE TO REDUCE OUR PROGRAMS AT THIS TIME MERELY TO AVOID A POSSIBLE AND ERRONEOUS BAD PRESS.

HILL

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